At a special meeting of the Vestry of Christ's Church, Raleigh, held on the 18th day of June, 1840, a letter of resignation from the Rev. Dr. Freeman, the Rector of the church, was read in the following words—

"Dear Brethren,

Believing that the time has fully come when I can no longer hope to be substantially useful to the people of my charge, I feel it my duty to tender to you, as I hereby do, my resignation as Rector of Christ's Church: and I beg that you will accept the same, as it is offered in the spirit of good will and brotherly love.

As the last day of August next, will complete the eleventh year of my ministry among you, I propose, should my resignation be accepted, that our connexion as pastor and parishioners terminate at that period, if not before.

With many thanks for past kindnesses, and with heartfelt wishes and earnest prayers for the future prosperity, both temporal and spiritual, of yourselves and the congregation which you represent,

I am, Brethren,

Respectfully and affectionately,

Your friend and servant,

GEO. W. FREEMAN.

To

The Wardens and Vestry
of Christ's Church Raleigh,

June 18*th*, 1840."

And accompanying the said letter of resignation (to be read in case the vestry should ask for the reasons which had induced the resignation) was a paper in the following words—

"Should it be inquired by the wardens and vestry on what grounds the Rector of Christ's Church, has come to the conclusion that he can no longer hope to be generally useful to the congregation comprising his present charge, he would, in all kindness, but frankly, submit the following reply:

That it is essential to the usefulness of one sustaining the relation of pastor of a christian flock, that the members of his communion as a body, and himself should "be of one mind," in regard, at least, to the more important matters of faith and practice, the Rector supposes will not be denied. The pastor and his flock, maintaining and acting

under *different*, especially *opposite* views of christian doctrine and christian duty, it is easy to see that the respect entertained for him, and consequently his influence for good, must be greatly circumscribed. Instruction, reproof, warning, on those points which they differ, will be thrown away—nay, will probably be trampled under foot; and he who offers them may soon become an object of dislike, if not of scorn and insult. Nor will there be hope of better success in his ministrations to that interesting class, which the christian minister habitually regards as "the hope of the flock"—the young and rising generation. The prevailing sentiments and practice of their seniors in the church, will, with them, almost always outweigh the precepts of their minister, and he can never open his lips in instruction to them upon any of those contested points, however important he may view them, with the least hope of effect. His office, as an authoritative instructer in righteousness, has virtually come to an end.

And it is much in this situation that the Rector of Christ's Church finds himself placed, now at the close of the eleventh year of his ministry in that Church. He and a large portion of the communicants of his charge, including a large majority of the wardens and vestry, are directly at issue upon a subject which he sincerely believes to be intimately connected with the interests of vital religion among them—that of christians indulging in worldly amusements.

When he first took charge of the congregation, and for *several*, perhaps *five*, years afterwards, such a thing as a communicant's attending a theatre, a public ball, or even a private dancing party, was scarcely known among them, nor was there a voice heard in approbation of such a practice. Indeed, it is believed that the sense of the great majority, if not of the whole communion, was strong and decisive against it. That the Rector was of the same opinion with his flock upon the subject, the whole tenor of his teaching, both public and private, from the beginning of his ministrations, has abundantly borne witness: and for *five* years he was happy in the belief, that he and his brethren of the communion were, in respect to the matter in question, "of one heart and one soul."

Since that period, however, a change has come over the congregation—a new spirit has arisen, and the pastor and his flock are no longer "of one mind." Successively, the questions have been *virtually* raised and more or less discussed between the congregation and their minister; [1] whether communicants of the church, consistently

with the solemn vows which are upon them, and their sacred character as "temples of the Holy Ghost," as "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven," may give at their own houses, or attend at the houses of others, those worldly entertainments, commonly called dancing parties: and [2] whether they may, with like consistency, attend public places of worldly amusements, such as Theatres, Circuses and Balls.

On both these questions the Rector has constantly, and he trusts conscientiously, yet affectionately, maintained the negative. Notwithstanding his frequently expressed opinions, however, and in spite of his most strenuous efforts to procure from his people what he deemed a right decision, and to establish a wholesome practice upon these points, the *former* question, it would seem, and he supposes will be admitted, has, for some time past, been, by the general voice, as indicated by the general *practice*, decided in the *affirmative*. While the *latter*—although pending the former, it seemed to be conceded that it was by no means to be sustained—has since found numerous practical supporters, and, more recently, has, in like manner with the other, seemed to be affirmatively settled.

Thus are these two questions decided, at least by the general practice of the communicants, in direct contrariety to the known opinions, and the solemn public and private teaching of their minister.

Under these circumstances—there having been no change of opinion on the part of the Rector, it still being his honest and decided belief that the practice thus established, if persevered in, will be ultimately destructive of all vital religion in the congregation, and he being deprived by these decisions, as he thinks, of all reasonable hope of further benefiting materially the people of his charge, especially *the young* to whom he has been accustomed to look with most confidence of hope—he has felt it to be his duty, and, indeed, the only consistent course left for him to pursue, to retire, if permitted, from his most difficult post, and give place to some other person who, by the blessing of God, may be more successful in engaging the affections of the congregation, and inspiring them with respect and confidence in him, as a wise and judicious pastor, and a safe spiritual guide.

GEO. W. FREEMAN.

Raleigh, June 18th, 1840."

And thereupon on motion it was resolved, that the said resignation be accepted, to take effect at the expiration of the current year of the pastor's engagement.

And it was also resolved, that a committee be appointed by the senior warden to consider of and report proper resolutions, &c., on the occasion, to the vestry at an adjourned meeting, to be held on the 25th of said month.

And at the adjourned meeting Messrs. Badger and Bryan, the committee so appointed, submitted the following report—which, with the preamble and resolutions accompanying the same, was adopted by the Vestry :

The Committee having read the paper drawn up by the Rev. Dr. Freeman, and containing the reasons which induced his resignation, tendered and accepted at the last meeting of the vestry, think it due to themselves, to the vestry and to the congregation, to submit some observations thereupon, before offering the resolutions which accompany this report.

The Committee believe that there are many things in the conduct of life, about which religion gives us "no positive precept," in reference to which there is "room for difference of opinion," and on which every member of the church has a right to form his own judgment, and is not justly liable to condemnation for it by them who embrace an opposite opinion. Among these things "are certain diversions and a certain degree of intercourse with general society, about the lawfulness or unlawfulness of which, there not only does, but *may reasonably* exist, that sort of difference in opinion which prevailed among the Jewish converts as to the Mosaic rites, or among the Gentiles as to meat offered to idols." In regard to these he that partaketh hath no right to despise him that scruples to partake; nor hath he that entertains the scruple a right to judge him that partaketh. Every man, indeed should be *fully persuaded* in his own mind lest his conscience condemn him in that which his practice alloweth—but beyond this, in regard to these things, there is, in our view, no positive and obligatory precept. In regard to them therefore *no man* has a right to require of another, as a point of religious duty, conformity with his opinion or his practice. If he can establish by argument the justness of his opinion, or reasonableness of his practice, he will have achieved the victory of truth over error, but he can have no right to supply by authority the defectiveness of his proof. We believe that "to inveigh in general terms against public assemblies, and amusements sanctioned by society, as if all toleration of them were positive evidence of a worldly spirit" and "as if a practice necessarily

became unchristian because it had public opinion in its favor," "is neither just nor practically useful;" that it is "to confound things indifferent in themselves, with things wrong in themselves," and to erect out of an allowable difference of opinion on subjects left unsettled by positive precept, "a sort of party distinction" in the Church, whereby "the union among brethren who have one common interest is dissolved, and the friendly collision which would be beneficial to "both parties is exchanged for an injurious opposition."

With these views (held we believe by a large majority of the congregation) we and others exercising an undoubted right to decide for ourselves, those matters which have not been settled for us, have adopted the opinion that "those entertainments commonly called dancing parties" are *in themselves* innocent and allowable, and hence we have attended them at the houses of our friends, and have given them at our own. We have thought that if christians in St. Paul's time were at liberty when bidden, to attend feasts at the houses of avowed idolaters, it cannot be in itself wrong, in our day, to attend or give feasts, with or to, friends and acquaintances who are at the least nominal christians, and certainly neither professed idolaters nor atheists. As this privilege of attending such feasts in the apostle's day was not restricted to those from which dancing was banished, so we conceive that their lawfulness now is not affected by the presence or absence of that amusement.

We have been aware that our Rector entertained different views, we have regretted that he did, but we freely accorded to him the same right of judgment which we claimed for ourselves, and never for a moment supposed that such difference of opinion formed any barrier against christian communion, or kindly intercourse, or mutual respect. We felt sure that no man had a right to demand uniformity of opinion or practice in matters not determined by christianity; and that the relation of pastor and people did not involve the surrender on the part of the latter of all freedom of thought, and the adoption of any rule of conduct, merely because he deemed it proper and necessary to prescribe it. If we are wrong in this, then the gospel so far from having delivered us from that body of ceremonial observances which the Jews found intolerable, and given us some freedom of thought and action in regard to matters of mere expediency, (that is of matters not determined by the gospel) has in effect left us liable to the imposition of a ritual for all the intercourse of life as strict,

minute and burdensome as that of the Jews without its permanence, its limitations, its uniformity, or its divine original. To submit to divine appointments with implicit obedience is the part of true wisdom, for of them we are sure the reason is the highest and best whether it be known to us or not; but the opinions of men can justly command assent only so far as they *appear* to be supported by adequate reasons. To give to these opinions the force of laws would have an effect upon the pastor no less injurious than upon the congregation, and if all right of inquiry, of private judgment, be denied to the congregation, it seems a very useless proceeding to put the scriptures into their hands with directions to examine—to try the doctrines they hear—to search the scriptures for their guidance in the path of duty. Yielding to others the same freedom we claim for ourselves, we had supposed the difference of opinion which has obtained between the Rector and the congregation, furnished no ground of separation, and we were greatly surprised when we first learned that he thought otherwise.

With regard to "Public Balls, Circuses and Theatres," we are not aware that the congregation *generally*, has determined any thing as to their propriety or expediency, at least any thing in favor of the two last named, but whatever may be our individual opinion respecting them, we claim no right to enforce its adoption on others. These, with the dancing parties, we conceive to belong to a debateable subject, on which difference of opinion by no means argues difference of principle. That abstaining cannot be justly viewed as betokening "affection of righteousness over much" nor participation as proof of "slavery to the world and a love of pleasure in place of love to God."

If therefore the decision by general practice be, as the Rector supposes, it would furnish no necessary ground of separation, unless it can be shown that no opinion or practice of the congregation should ever be avowed or followed, when in opposition to "the known opinion and solemn public and private teaching of their minister;" or in other words, that any matter on which the Rector deems it his duty to deliver a solemn and official opinion, at once ceases to be a a subject of discussion and inquiry, and by force of his opinion becomes a point of faith, or an obligatory rule of conduct.

This proposition, we are sure that the Rector will not in terms maintain, and yet it seems to us that the reasons given for resigning

his situation do necessarily presuppose a duty no less extensive, of submission to, and conformity of, opinion and practice with the Rector, on the part of the congregation; to this we can never yield; to this we do not think the congregation will, or ought to yield.

Shortly then we think the matters referred to in Dr. Freeman's paper, are not things determined by the founder of our faith, that they belong to a large class of objects indifferent in themselves, involving mere questions of expediency, in regard to which it is an error "to attempt to fix a definite limit of universal obligation," and by consequence that the differences adverted to by the Rector, furnish in themselves no just ground of interruption to full, affectionate, mutual, christrian intercourse and communion, and are only just cause of separation on account of the mistaken views (as we think) of the Rector in relation thereto.

But we claim no right to pass judgment on the Rector's opinions on these matters, nor to think hardly of him because he does not agree in opinion with us; we doubt not his sincerity—we respect his motives, we remember his virtues and his services, and having frankly stated the views we entertain in common with the great body of the congregation, we recommended to the vestry the adoption of the accompanying resolutions.

G. E. BADGER.
J. H. BRYAN.

June 25th, 1840.

The pastoral connexion of the Rev. Dr. Freeman, with the congregation of Christ Church, which has now subsisted for eleven years having been dissolved by his resignation, the wardens and vestry deem it proper on the occasion to declare, that, in their judgment, Dr. Freeman during that whole period, has discharged the duties of his station with eminent ability and faithfulness; that he has been greatly instrumental in enlarging the number and elevating the character of the members of the church; that for his understanding and attainments as a Divine, and his performances as a preacher, the congregation generally up to the very monment of his resignation felt great respect, for his person a warm attachment, and in his piety entire confidence; and that the vestry have no doubt these sentiments were fully merited by the personal conduct and christian character of Dr. Freeman.

Therefore, *Resolved*, That when the resignation of the Rev. Dr. Freeman was presented, we felt the deepest regret that he should for any cause have deemed it necessary to resign the charge of the congregation.

Resolved, That Dr. Freeman has presided over this parish with great ability and uniform zeal and fidelity, and that his ministrations have been blessed with signal and very unusual success.